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EDITORIALS—

Let's Get Facts Before Laying Blame for Cuba

WHEN IT COMES to the dangerous game of international skulduggery, the United States often behaves as awkwardly as a pimply teenager on his first date.

The Cuban fiasco once again dramatizes this to the detriment of American prestige throughout the world. In the first place, such a risky invasion—which hardly could have been undertaken without some American aid—shouldn't have been permitted without a reasonable chance of success.

Because it was a fiasco, the popular pastime since has been to place the blame. The strongest inclination is to charge the responsibility for failure to the Central Intelligence Agency, the governmental bureau charged with preparing estimates on situations in critical areas.

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 IN THIS CASE, the CIA contends it had correct information accurately evaluated. This has led to speculation that the responsibility for failure was with the military.

But, in the furor of finding a scapegoat, too little attention has been given to the fact that this was primarily a Cuban operation involving Cuban freedom fighters, not U. S. troops.

Undeniably the U. S. gave aid and comfort to the invaders, not with any designs on Cuba but in an effort to thwart an intrusion into the Western Hemisphere by Communist Russia, which surely has pawned Fidel Castro into the Soviet apparatus.

Thus, the invaders — Cubans — had a say in where, when and how the invasion was to be conducted . . . perhaps the whole say. And if this was a military failure, rather than an intelligence miscalculation, it may well have been confined to the inability

to hold a beachhead. In fact, there have been indications that the invading forces were made up of two or more Cuban factions working at cross purposes.

There is also the possibility that the real fault in the U. S. participation was in its failure to take full control of the operation and direct it on the basis of our intelligence and military knowledge, rather than allow it to proceed with the emotions of the bickering Cuban forces. It may be argued that if we were giving any aid at all, even if only to the extent of encouragement, we should have insisted that the operation be conducted by our standards.

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 THE POINT is that we don't really know what happened. Some of the things we have heard may be fact, others nothing more than exaggeration or false rumor. And we can't know fully what happened, because intelligence and counter-intelligence operations can't be explained to the public without also explaining them to the Communists.

Under the circumstances, we can see little to be gained on speculating about who is to blame for the failure. It's enough to say the forces of freedom have had a setback and we have suffered a blow to our prestige.

The unhappy incident is now being investigated by a presidential board headed by retired Army Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor. Our best hope is that this inquiry will uncover any mistakes we may have made, and produce recommendations to profit by them.

In the meantime, we should reserve judgment and avoid extravagant condemnation. We can criticize more accurately, and with some justice